

CD 2011-111



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, Director of Orchestral Studies and Conductor

Marc Funkenhauser, saxophone

“Symphonic Impressions”

Thursday, November 3, 2011

7:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre

Edward Johnson Building

2011-12 SEASON

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, Conductor

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Concertino da Camera

For Alto Saxophone and 11 Instruments

Jacques Ibert
(1890-1962)

Allegro con Moto

Larghetto - Animato molto

Marc Funkenhauser, saxophone

UTSO Concerto Competition Winner

David Bowser, graduate student conductor

Capriccio espagnol, Op. 34

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844-1908)

Alborada—

Variazioni—

Alborada—

Scena e canto gitano—

Fandango asturiano

INTERMISSION

Pictures at an Exhibition

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)
Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel

Promenade

The Gnome

Promenade

The Old Castle

Promenade

Tuileries (Children Quarrelling at Play)

Bylde

Promenade

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks

Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

Limoges - the Market

Catacombs (Sepulchrum romanum)

Cum mortuis in lingua mortua

The Hut on Chicken's Legs (Baba-Yaga)

The Great Gate at Kiev

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Program Notes

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)
Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
(1891-4)

Debussy described his short *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, written in the early 1890s, as a "general impression" of a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé. Over a half century later, French composer Pierre Boulez nominated Debussy's evocative tone poem as the awakening of modern music in which the very idea of musical form itself is challenged and overthrown. So how did Debussy's musical representation of the interior world of a mythical creature, half-man, half-beast, come to carry the historical weight of so quiet a revolution?

Debussy, approaching 30, living in Paris, had already written much music. As a leading light among the younger generation of Parisian intellectuals, he attended gatherings and soirées in bistros, cafés and bookshops in that most creatively stimulating of cities. The most prestigious of these took place at the home of the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) on Tuesday evenings. Soon, collaboration between the two artists, a reading of the poem with accompanying music, was announced at the Théâtre d'art for February 27, 1891: "*L'après-midi d'un faune* / tableau en vers de Stéphane Mallarmé, partie musicale de Mr. De Bussy." Mallarmé's initial reaction to Debussy's music had been lukewarm and he delayed the performance indefinitely. The essence of the symbolist ideal was allusion and suggestion, and Mallarmé himself paid great attention to the essential musicality of his own written words. "I had thought to have composed the music myself," he said of his own intense, suggestive, fluid and highly wrought poem. Later, after hearing the first performance of the score, his enthusiasm for the younger composer's music

was generous: "Your illustration of *L'après-midi d'un faune*, presents no dissonance with my text, unless to go further really, into nostalgia and into light, with finesse, with sensuality, with richness," he wrote in a letter to the composer.

Debussy, himself, was low key in his claims about the new piece. "It demonstrates a disdain for constructional know-how," he wrote to a critic who had asked for more information. "It has no respect for tonality, being composed in a mode which is intended to contain all the nuances. All the same, it follows the ascending shape of the poem as well as the scenery so marvelously described in the text." Debussy fails to add that his own prelude also has as many measures as Mallarmé's poem has lines. His score evolves out of the opening flute melody — it is a beautifully evocative phrase that allows for a kaleidoscope of subtly different interpretations. The melody in turn grows out of Mallarmé's line "A single line of sound, aloof, disinterested" and in it lies the heartbeat of the score. Each time the flute melody appears, we hear something new, a new shade of colour in Debussy's improvisatory-like score. Like Mallarmé, Debussy avoids direct statement. His ever-shifting music suggests and alludes, while its mood, sensuously erotic, floats dreamlike between states of wakefulness and reverie.

JACQUES IBERT (1890-1962)
Concertino da Camera, for alto saxophone and 11 instruments (1935)

Ibert was born and died in Paris and was French to the core. An elegant man, by all accounts, sophisticated, well-travelled, suave. Gallic wit, elegance and virtuosity are hallmarks of two of his best-known works — the orchestral *Divertissement* and the *Trois pièces brèves* for wind quintet, both

from 1930. Ibert was a prolific composer who tackled most of the established musical forms. His style is hard to pin down as he consciously sought to keep an open mind to all influences. "All systems are valid," he said, "provided that one derives music from them." His modest *Concertino da Camera*, scored for alto saxophone with a string quintet and wind quintet plus trumpet, shows characteristically French traits of technical polish, clarity and sophistication of style. Now core repertoire for the saxophone player, it was written in 1935 for the German-born American saxophonist Sigurd Rascher (1907-2001) who was teaching in both Copenhagen and Malmö, Sweden at the time. Rascher, who had more than 140 works dedicated to him and taught several generations of saxophone players at leading music schools in the United States, was renowned for both technical skill and his wide range. His dexterity in the then infrequently heard high *altissimo* register encouraged Ibert to explore the instrument's expressive potential in some long-controversial passages, subsequently marked *ad libitum* in pencil in the composer's manuscript at the request of Marcel Mule, the French virtuoso who also championed the work. Ibert cast the *Concertino* in two movements, though the *Larghetto* introduction to the *finale* is as long as the movements on either side and, essentially, functions as a slow middle movement. So, to the ear, if not the eye, two exuberant, fluently running quick movements, animated by lively contrapuntal writing, surround a gently pulsing, lightly accompanied slow movement.

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV
(1844-1908)

***Capriccio espagnol, Op. 34* (1887)**

"The critics and the public are wrong in calling *Capriccio* a magnificently orchestrated piece," Rimsky-Korsakov said of this vibrant evocation of Spain. "It is a brilliant

composition for the orchestra." He goes on to explain that its many solo cadenzas, changes of timbre, the judicious matching of melodic and accompaniment figures to instrumental sonority and rhythmic underpinning of the percussion – in a piece that only rarely displays its full orchestral resources – constitute "the very essence of the composition, and not its garb or orchestration." The origins of the piece lay in a planned virtuoso Spanish fantasy for violin and orchestra. But the concept changed during a summer vacation in 1887 while Rimsky-Korsakov was staying in a rented villa outside St. Petersburg. Like *Sheherazade*, the *Capriccio* features solo violin in a prominent way, evidence of its original conception as a concerto-like piece. "According to my plans the *Capriccio* was to glitter with dazzling orchestral colour and, manifestly, I had not been wrong," the composer wrote in his autobiography. The orchestra of the Imperial Russian Opera in St. Petersburg gave the première under the composer's direction – after applauding each movement at the first rehearsal. The audience followed suit by demanding that the entire piece be reprised.

Inspired by a collection of Spanish folk songs, Rimsky-Korsakov composed his single-movement tone poem in five continuous movements, linked together by the melody of an *alborado*. On its first appearance, this 'dawn song', with full orchestra and five percussionists, is no gentle greeting to the day; rather, it seems designed to wake an entire neighbourhood. Imposing orchestral variations on an Andalusian theme are evocatively introduced by the four horns then taken up, in turn, by strings, cor anglais, and more passionately again by the strings, each time with distinctive colouring. After a reprise of the *Alborado*, the '*Scene and Gypsy Song*' includes prominent cadenzas for brass, violin, flute, clarinet and harp and passages in which the violins and cellos are required to imitate the sound of the guitar. Finally, an Asturian

Fandango, complete with castanets, propels the piece forwards and its coda again brings back the opening *alborado*.

MODEST MUSSORGSKY

(1839-1881) *Orch. by Maurice Ravel*

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874/1922)

As a piece of Russian realism, alive with vivid colours, varied textures, colourful scenes and telling everyday situations, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* ranks with the best. Its original piano version is craggy and asymmetric and does not fall easily under the fingers. Yet Mussorgsky himself was a fine pianist and knew exactly what he was doing when he wrote the music. *Pictures* lies many steppes away from the bland salon miniatures and flashy showpieces that formed the diet of 19th century Russian pianists. In it, Mussorgsky uses a keen sense of dramatic realism to bring to life ten pictures by his recently deceased friend, the Russian artist and architect Victor Hartmann. A memorial exhibition of 400 of Hartmann's drawings, watercolours and set designs, mounted in St. Petersburg, gave Mussorgsky an incentive to write his own memorial to a prematurely dead friend who had given him advice about his newly revised opera *Boris Godunov*.

Mussorgsky was just 35 at the time he wrote the piece. He was born to an aristocratic land-owning family, but dispossessed of his wealth in 1861, when the Czar freed the Russian masses from serfdom. Forced to work the tedious nine-to-five shift of a civil servant and possessing an incomplete musical education, Mussorgsky had only his raw talent to fall back on. He wrote this personal tribute to his 39 year-old friend at white heat, in less than three weeks, saying he 'could hardly manage to scribble it all down on paper' because the musical ideas were coming so fast. The pictorial strength of Mussorgsky's miniature tone poems far outweighs the provincialism of Hartmann's work. In the

opening *Promenade*, the composer portrays himself wandering from picture to picture. As he goes deeper into the memorial exhibition, the *Promenade* melody gradually becomes integrated into the music of the pictures themselves, increasingly colouring the spectator's mood. Ravel's orchestration, commissioned by the Russian conductor Serge Koussevitzky, was made in 1922, a half century after Mussorgsky wrote the original piano suite in 1874. It was by no means the first such orchestration, nor the last, but it is the most enduring of three dozen or so known orchestrations.

Promenade. Mussorgsky portrays himself and his thoughts.

Gnomus depicts a grotesque little gnome in his design for a nutcracker, where the nuts are inserted into the shrieking gnome's mouth. Ravel's orchestration enhances the sinister aspect of the score.

Il vecchio castello. A troubadour, playing saxophone in Ravel's orchestration, performs in front of a mediaeval Italian castle.

Tuileries. Hartman painted this picture after a stay in Paris. Mussorgsky gave it the subtitle "Children Quarrelling at Play."

Bylbo is the Polish word for oxen. Hartman's watercolour shows an old-fashioned wooden cart slowly moving along on its enormous wooden wheels. Mussorgsky's piano original is played fortissimo from the first appearance of the cart, whose melody now begins to incorporate that of the *Promenade*. Ravel's opening tuba solo, however, approaches from the distance.

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks
Hartmann's set designs for the Petipa ballet *Trilby* include a scene with children dressed up as canary chicks still in their shells.

Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle was originally titled "Two Jews, One Rich, the Other Poor" by Mussorgsky, who owned the original pencil drawings.

Limoges - the Market. Ravel omits the *Promenade* preceding *Limoges* and moves

abruptly to the piece. Hartmann's sketch, made as he stood in the market place, depicts a group of lively, chattering women.

Catacombae (Sepulchrum romanum).

Hartmann's watercolour depicts the painter himself and two friends exploring the Roman catacombs in Paris by the light of a single lantern. With no break, Mussorgsky's score leads to *Cum mortuis in lingua mortua (With the Dead in the Language of the Dead)*. "It is the place of skulls," Mussorgsky wrote. "The skulls begin to glow faintly from within."

The Hut on Chicken's Legs. Here Mussorgsky took inspiration from Hartmann's

intricate design for a giant clock. The hut on stilts is the legendary home of the Russian witch Baba-Yaga, whose ride Mussorgsky gleefully portrays.

The Great Gate at Kiev. Very Russian and very Mussorgsky. This imposing tone poem springs from Hartmann's design for a giant new city gate. Mussorgsky's music transforms the original *Promenade* theme into one of the grandest climaxes in the orchestral repertoire.

— Notes © Keith Horner 2011. Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

Biographies

One of the most highly respected and versatile conductors at work today, an insightful interpreter of works from the ballet, operatic, symphonic and choral traditions, **David Briskin** was appointed Director of Orchestral Studies and Conductor of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra in July 2008.

Mr. Briskin is Music Director and Principal Conductor of The National Ballet of Canada, a position he has held since 2006. Prior to moving to Toronto, Mr. Briskin lived and worked for 23 years as a conductor and educator in New York City. For seven years, Mr. Briskin served as Conductor with American Ballet Theatre, leading performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York's City Center and in major opera houses throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas. He is a frequent guest conductor with such companies as New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and Houston Ballet, among others. For three seasons, Mr. Briskin served as Music Director for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and served as conductor for The Juilliard

School's Dance Division from 1993 to 2005.

In addition to his work in dance, Mr. Briskin has enjoyed great success on the concert stage. He has conducted the Pittsburgh, Detroit, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Akron, Cincinnati Pops and Singapore Symphony Orchestras; the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Juilliard Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, among others.

For six years he served as the Music Director of the 150-voice Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra in New York, a tenure highlighted by annual performances at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Briskin's opera schedule has taken him throughout the U.S. and Canada including performances with such companies as Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, Opera Carolina, Lake George Opera and Sarasota Opera. He has also collaborated with the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York, creating and conducting productions for their highly acclaimed Arts in Education series, and served on

the faculty of the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv from 1999-2005.

Over the years Mr. Briskin has been extremely active in arts education. For three seasons he was Artistic Coordinator and Host of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Education Concerts. He has given lectures for the Caramoor Summer Music Festival, the National Society of Arts and Letters and the Conductor's Guild and has participated on panels for the American Symphony Orchestra League and Chamber Music America. He has served on the faculties of Queens College, CUNY, the 92nd Street Y and the Mannes College of Music and had a ten-year association with Lincoln Center Institute for Aesthetic Education. Mr. Briskin attended the Indiana University School of Music where he studied voice, piano and choral conducting. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree in orchestral conducting from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Master of Arts degree in conducting from Queens College, City University of New York.

Rising young soloist, educator, and passionate artist are a few words that can be used to describe saxophonist **Marc Funkenhauser**. From the most intimate of chamber music venues to the Big Band stage, he is at home in various musical settings and styles. Winner of such notable competitions such as the 2009 University of Windsor Concerto Showcase, the 2010 Ron W. Ianni Memorial Scholarship Competition, and more recently the 2011 University of Toronto Concerto Competition, Marc captivates audiences with his energy and passion. This coming spring, Marc will be giving multiple performances of the Glazunov saxophone concerto with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. Marc is a graduate of the University of Windsor where he

completed his undergraduate degree in music education. He is currently pursuing his Masters in Music in Performance at the University of Toronto, studying with Dr. Wallace Halladay.

David Bowser has conducted music for ballet, opera, film, television and the concert stage, and has performed in Canada, the United States, France, Austria, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Following studies in flute with Nicole Saumon at the Conservatoires de Musique in Tours and in Paris, France, David earned a Master of Music degree with High Distinction in composition at the University of Toronto, and the Diplôme d'Etudes supérieures II (Masters Degree) in conducting under Raffi Armenian at the Conservatoire de Musique in Montreal. He also studied voice in Montreal with Marie Daveluy. He continued his formal studies in Austria, studying orchestral and operatic conducting at the Musikhochschule in Graz with Wolfgang Bozic, and at the Musikhochschule in Vienna with Leopold Hager. David has participated in many conducting clinics and masterclasses with Eric Ericson, Georg Tintner and Gustav Meier, among others, and attended the conducting classes of Gianluigi Gelmetti at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy. He is the recipient of numerous grants and awards including the Ontario Arts Council's Chalmers Performing Arts Grant and the Canada Council's Professional Development Grant.

Currently, David is Music Director and Conductor of the NYCO Symphony Orchestra in Toronto and the Oakville Choral Society. He is an active guest conductor, composer, university instructor, vocal coach and visual artist, and is a doctoral student at the University of Toronto.

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Holly Cheng
Tania Cheng
Wesley Khurana
Emily Kruspe*
James Kruspe*
Chang Liu
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Erick Wawrzekiewicz
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Adelaide Beach
Wesley Bells
Andrew Chan
Alessia Disimino
James Hayes
Stelth Ng
Meghan Ruel
Meagan Turner
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Monday, November 14, 2011
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

Debussy: *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Sonata for flute, viola and harp; Liebermann: Sonata for flute and harp; Schaposchnikov: Sonata; Kelly Marie-Murphy: Trio for flute, viola and harp. Guest violist Rennie Regehr.



Jazz Splendour

Wednesday, November 23, 2011
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

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Kirk MacDonald

Thursday, November 24, 2011
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Canada's pre-eminent jazz saxophonist Kirk MacDonald performs with the 10 O'Clock Jazz Orchestra, Terry Promane, director, featuring MacDonald's own composition, *Family Suite*.



Festival Winds

Monday, November 28, 2011
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

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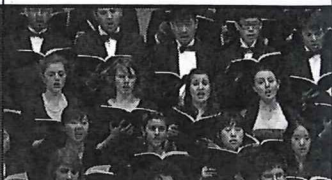


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